

# Xwe'chi'eXen: A PLACE OF CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Lummi Nation continues to oppose development of the Cherry Point area, which the Lummi know as Xwe'chi'eXen, due to threats to culturally and spiritually significant properties and the unavoidable impacts that such development causes to treaty-protected tribal fishing grounds and stations. Hereditary Chief Bill James explains that Xwe'chi'eXen is a revered place and is the home of the Ancient Ones. It is a landscape honored by Lummi people and their ancestors since the beginning of time for its traditional, cultural, and spiritual significance.

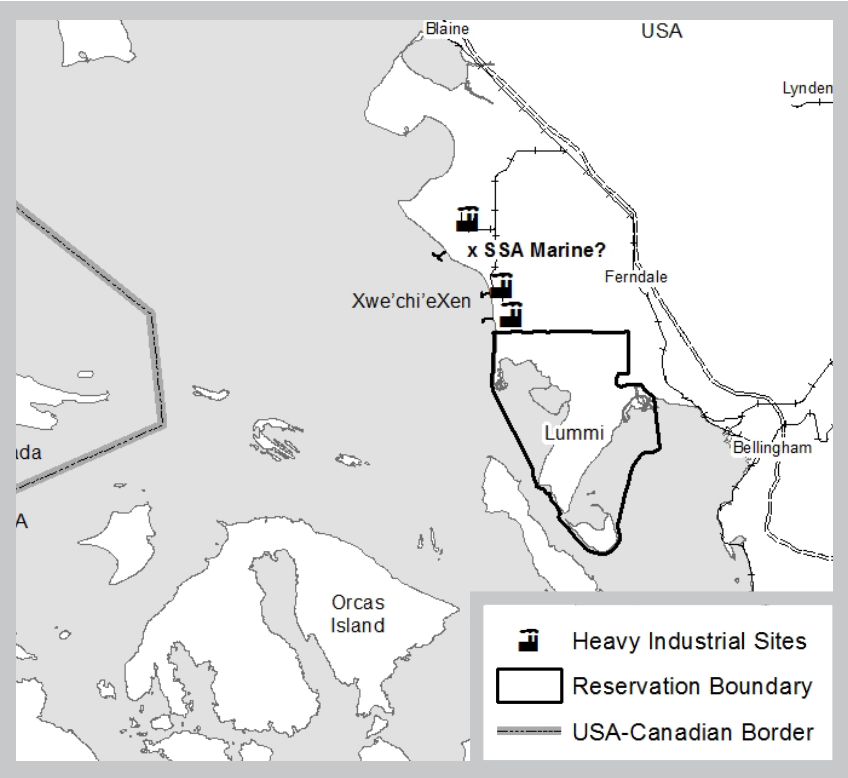


## Cherry Point has always been important to the Lummi people

From the beginning of time the people who are now known as Lummi fished, hunted, gathered, lived, laughed, cried, and died at Cherry Point and the surrounding lands including the islands of Puget Sound. Many Lummi tribal members trace their family lines to Cherry Point.

### Cherry Point: A historic gathering point for the Lummi people

Cherry Point is very near to what is now the Lummi Indian Reservation and has been a geographic center within the Usual and Accustomed (U&A) grounds of the Lummi people since time immemorial. Historically, Lummi people traveled primarily by canoe throughout the waters of the Puget Sound, and landed for fishing, camping, and other purposes at Cherry Point.



### Lummi's cultural uses of Cherry Point

Just like in the past, Lummi people use Cherry Point seasonally to hunt, fish and gather. Unlike today, when it is easy to travel by plane with an overnight bag, in the older times Lummi people would relocate their whole households for a season or longer to Cherry Point or other important places.

### Important species at Cherry Point

In addition to the salmon, crab, and other fisheries, large schools of herring used to form and spawn in the waters off Cherry Point. Herring and herring eggs (roe), which were harvested for human consumption and commerce by the Lummi people, are also an important food source for salmon and other species.



The Lummi word for Cherry Point is Xwe'chi'eXen, which is the name for a wild mink that was hunted there historically.

### Can the laws protect the cultural value of Cherry Point?

U.S. and Washington state laws provide levels of protection for historic sites and archaeological materials. But the laws pertain to protection and are focused on tangible properties. Traditional cultural properties include tangible and intangible aspects such as particular plants and animals, a sense of place, a particular view or smell or feeling. There are no laws that say do not disturb, which is what the Lummi Nation would prefer. The laws say avoid impacts, minimize impacts, and mitigate for unavoidable impacts. This approach could work in public places, or Lummi could have signs, or museums, or people monitoring, but that doesn't mean that every disturbance can be avoided – some impacts simply cannot be mitigated. For this reason Lummi has always opposed development of the Cherry Point area.

For more information and project updates, please visit the Lummi Nation Awareness Project at [Innr.lummi-nsn.gov/LummiWebsite/Website.php?PageID=235](http://Innr.lummi-nsn.gov/LummiWebsite/Website.php?PageID=235)